415 as (*tunweno*, sing: *kanweno*) in which relish is also served. None of these pots can be covered during cooking, although the process of evaporation can be diminished slightly by covering the food with leaves in some cases. European saucepans are appreciated because they quicken cooking, but even these do not seem to be used with lids.

252 From a dietetic point of view a knowledge of native methods of cooking is of interest, since it should enable us to tell the extent to which the people either preserve or, alternatively, destroy the nutritive value of their foodstuffs by their methods of preservation, and also the variety in diet they are able to secure. To the sociologist cooking is a traditional art requiring more or less individual skill for its performance, learnt by a special educational mechanism, treated as an honoured calling or else as a menial task. It is also one activity of the many that go to make up the routine of the day or the month. Here it may be said at once that none of the Bemba methods of cooking appear very difficult to acquire or are governed by very precise rules as to quantities, &c. They are nearly all very lengthy however and require considerable energy and pains if they are to be successful. Domestic ability is admired and cooking is considered the centre of the woman's social life, but a comparison of Bemba cooking recipes with those of the Ngoni of Nyasaland or many of the Mashona peoples seems to show that the former are in some ways less ingenious in their use of the different foodstuffs available.

Porridge.

The preparation of porridge (*ukunayo bwali*) is obviously the most important task of the Bemba cook. Porridge is the essential element of any meal, and the time taken to cook it determines the whole routine of eating, and indirectly the tribal practices of hospitality.

To make the porridge, grain is threshed separately each day. The work is exhausting, and it is very rare for a housewife to grind a two days' supply. The millet heads must first be pounded (*ukutwa*)
[412] to free the fine grains from the stalks. The Bemba use high wooden mortars (*amabende*, sing: *libende*) from 2 to 3 feet high, in which they stamp the millet with stout poles about 3 feet long. Sometimes the
252 woman stands to pound her grain, stamping rhythmically up and
516 down with hands placed wide apart on the pestle. Sometimes she

252 516 sits on a stool grasping the mortar with her legs. Another method is to pound the grain in a hollow in the ground. Two women then sit opposite each other with legs apart and pound alternately, singing to keep time. Each holds a flail with one hand, and with 252 a quick movement of the other sweeps fresh heads of millet into the hole in the ground. This last method is probably less efficient, but it is more companionable and preferred by young people. The pounding is exhausting work. The women's bodies steam in the sun and the village resounds with the regular thud of the flails.[1]

The grain has now to be sifted from the chaff (*ukuela*). Winnowing consists in sending the grain swirling with a circular motion of the big open basket (*ulupe*) which sends the chaff to the surface where it can be scooped off while the grain remains beneath. It is then pounded for a few moments again (*ukusokola*) and then winnowed again (*ukupunga*). The chaff is emptied on the garden beds around the village and to this the natives attribute the greater fertility of this land. (Cf. p. 281).

252 It now remains to grind the flour (*ukupela*). Against the wall of
● 412 the veranda of each house is a small circular platform, about 9 inches from the ground, worn into a smooth groove with much
[516] grinding. In front of this the woman kneels, and on it she places the handfuls of grain which she grinds beneath a small stone. This
[533] task is reckoned very hard work and the women sing to lighten their labour. The rhythmic to-and-fro of the grinding stone, and the notes of a song, falling flatter and flatter, are the common sounds in a village in the late afternoon.

252 The flour so produced is of a coarse quality, and careful housewives sometimes grind it fresh before making the thin gruel (*umusunga*) with which a small baby is fed.[2] Some species of millet are distinguished as being easier to grind than others, and the flour is graded according to its whiteness, Kaffir-corn flour being the lightest.

To cook the porridge, the flour is merely tipped from the basket into water boiling in a big *inongo*. The process of gauging the

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[1] The conception that the African woman is an overworked drudge is probably derived from the sight of the housewife threshing, but I must add that on the occasion when I was myself most overcome with pity at the sight of the women pounding millet I overheard this remark from one victim to another in reference to myself: 'I don't know how these white women stand it. I should think her neck must ache bent over her writing all the morning.'

[2] Vide, p. 69.

241 If a trunk is too wide to be swarmed, a narrow pole is cut from the surrounding bush and slanted up against it, or the climber may choose to swing by his arms like a monkey from a convenient bough in a neighbouring tree.

241 ● 412 [326] 313 All Bemba are exceedingly neat and deft with an axe (*isembe*).[1] Each axe-head is fixed at an angle of about 45° through a slit drilled with red-hot iron in a knobbed holder (*umupini*) about 2 feet long. A man never parts with his axe. He carries it everywhere with him swung over his shoulder as he walks.[2] At the beginning of each tree-cutting season the axe-blades are reforged by native smiths, who heat the iron white-hot in a charcoal fire blown with skin bellows, and hammer it out to a new fine cutting edge. During a morning's work the axes are constantly rubbed on stones, often between the cutting of each tree. The blade is thus kept very sharp, and when the shaft is held at the right angle, it will sever a branch from the trunk with two or three deft slashes from alternate sides. I have seen a man clear a good-sized tree of branches in ten minutes in this way, and at the tree-cutting season the bush resounds with the blows of axes and the splintering of wood. Heavy boughs crash as they fall through the undergrowth beneath. At the top of the tree the work becomes more and more dangerous. A man may be left standing on a fork at the summit with one of the vertical stems as yet uncut. He has to clasp it with one hand to steady himself, while with the other he slashes at the trunk he is clinging to. He swings his axe till he hears the warning crack and feels the branch sway. Then he slides his body quick as a flash down the mutilated stump of the tree, yelling in triumph as he hears the bough fall.

241 Every year two or three deaths occur during the tree-cutting. Other men are disabled through falls. The Bemba recognize the work as dangerous, and we have seen that they delay the clearing of the bush until their strength is at its maximum (p. 50); until they have recovered from the effects of a beer-drink (p. 18); or until the weather is warm so that their hands do not slip on the axe-handle.

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[326] [1] Axe-heads appear to have been among the few implements which the Bemba smiths knew how to forge. Most axes are still made by native smiths, although more often than not, with European iron, stolen or bought. Only a few are bought at the stores.

[2] As a proverb illustrating parental affection the Bemba say, 'A child is like a little axe. If it hurts you, you just throw it over your shoulder.' *Mwana, kasembe. Nelyo kakukoma, nakakobeka na pa kubea.*

241 *Harvesting the millet.* The millet begins to ripen during April, first the quick-growing *masangwe* or that sown in dry weather (*icibuku*), the self-sown millet known as (*icimbuka*), and then the main crop (*amale yakalamba*) in May or even June. All these cold weather months the people mostly live in grass shelters near their gardens, the women reaping, the men cutting trees for next year's *icitemene*. In a new village there is plenty of timber to cut near by and the move to the *imitanda* seems unnecessary, although the Bemba appear to enjoy it as a kind of holiday. They like, too, to break off from the main community in small family groups. Often a man of standing will use the opportunity to see if he can collect unofficially a large enough following to enable him to set up a village of his own. People worsted in a quarrel, angry, insulted, accused of witchcraft, or in arrears with their tax, retire to *imitanda*, always sure of a plausible explanation of their conduct. In a village which has been built three or four years the gardens may lie far out into the bush at a distance of eight or ten miles, and in this case it is really necessary for the people to camp near them. Otherwise traditional agricultural practice seems to be made an excuse for temporarily leaving the village when desired.

[42] [112] Women alone do the reaping. They use small knives about four inches long, petal-shaped, and fixed into tiny handles about two inches long. These they grasp in the palm of the hand, and cut off each millet head with the blade, dropping it into a small basket. To choose the right moment to harvest is important. Unripe grain is wasteful; over-ripe blows too much dust into the eyes; damp heads hang down and are hard to cut. An educated native told me that a field sufficient to fill three-quarters of a granary would only provide enough to fill one half if the millet were reaped at the wrong time, but this statement I never tested.

The reaper must stand with the wind behind her, or she will be blinded by dust. She usually walks to the centre of her garden, clears a small space, does magic to give the new food lasting power (*icibyalilo*),[1] and then reaps one basket and puts it out to dry. Later she is usually joined by others and the women work in rows across the field. In a chief's garden as many as twenty women may be working together in this way. Sometimes

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[1] Cf. pp. 206–8.

226 439 must fish or starve. Fish, however, is not only regarded as food, but is also used as an article of trade. The supply in Lake Bangweulu seems to be virtually inexhaustible. The Unga can sell their fish for meal at a good price on the Copperbelt and elsewhere and are therefore unwilling to leave this otherwise undesirable habitat.

226 A number of methods of fishing are employed, such as netting, the setting of lines, trapping fish in baskets set in weirs, catching fish in baskets at low water, and poisoning. The diversity of fishing methods is not as great as it is for instance among the Lozi further south,(1) but since the Unga are able to catch plenty of fish with their traditional technique, improvements of method seem unlikely.

226 423 Netting grounds are available to all, but weirs have a fixed ownership. In certain circumstances a chief may reallocate a weir, but generally the owner has the absolute right of use. He calls in friends and relatives to fish and to repair the weir and each keeps the fish caught in his own basket.

439 Fish may either be sold at the waterside or taken to Kapalala - the ferry over the Luapula at the Congo border - or to the markets on the Copperbelt. A better price is obtainable at the latter but against that has to be set the time involved and expense incurred (such as the purchase of a bicycle or the canoe to Kapalala, and thence by lorry to Ndola). Of those selling at the waterside, some sell to African consumers, some to middlemen, some to Missions and some to representatives of European firms. Many fishermen, however, find their way to Mufulira market on the Copperbelt to market their own fish.(2)

The following figures taken by Brelsford in 1943 from some 250 Unga fishermen show the distribution of their choice:-(3)

64% sold their fish either in Kapalala or Ndola.
12% sold on the mainland at places like Fort Rosebery.
24% sold at the waterside.

CRAFTS

● 412 [411] 325 Bemba equipment is of the simplest kind. There are only four main implements: an axe-blade, locally forged and fixed into a wooden haft,(4) used for clearing the bush and most other wood-cutting jobs; iron hoe blades, also fixed into wooden hafts, were formerly traded from the Lungu; a spear, locally forged, used in war, hunting and fishing; and, finally the bow, now rarely made. These tools are of the simplest kind, neither carved nor decorated and, generally speaking, crafts are poorly developed. Decorative iron-work, which reached a high level of development among the Luba peoples, hardly exists. Iron-smelting is still practised among the Aushi(5) and was recently revived among the Chishinga(6) group, formerly

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(1) Gluckman, 1941. (2) Brelsford, 6, 1947.
(3) Brelsford, 5, 1946, gives a more detailed treatment on the subject.
(4) Mass produced European tools are now superseding the others.
(5) Barnes, 1926.
(6) Brelsford, 7, 1949.